

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
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INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2297

E.O. 11652: NGDS
TAGS: PFOR; PORG, SOPN, TS, LY, XA, XF
SUBJECT: ARAB-AFRICAN PRESS AGENCY MEETING IN TRIPOLI

REF: TUNIS 1798, TRIPOLI 0391

1. TUNIS PRESS CARRIED BRIEF REPORT ON APRIL 2 OF THE CONFERENCE OF ARABA AND AFRICAN PRESS AGENCIES HOLD IN TRIPOLI FROM MARCH 26 TO 31. IT NOTED THAT THERE WERE 35 AGENCIES REPRESENTED (NOTABLY NOT INCLUDING EGYPT, SYRIA, JORDAN, SUDAN, LEBANON, AND MOROCCO). ACCORDING TO THIS ACCOUNT THE CONFERENCE ADDRESSED ITSELF TO THE ON-GOING PROBLEMS OF ESTABLISHING INFORMATION SHARING ARRANGEMENTS AMONG NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES THAT SERVE THEIR INTERESTS BETTER THAN INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES. REPORT POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT NONE OF THE "AMBITIOUS RESOLUTIONS" ADOPTED AT THE MARCH 1975 MEETING OF THE SAME GROUP IN TUNIS HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT. IT STATED THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BUREAUS OF ARAB/AFRICAN AGENCIES IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAD BEEN DISCUSSED. IT ALSO SAID THAT AGENCIES WOULD SEEK UNESCO AID IN TRAINING AFRICAN INFORMATION SPECIALISTS WHILE TUNISIA, LIBYA AND IRAQ PROMISED TO OFFER TRAINING POSITIONS FOR 16 AFRICANS.

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2. A WESTERN JOURNALIST BASED IN TUNIS WHO ATTENDED CONFERENCE CHARACTERIZED IT AS A DISASTER. NON-PARTICIPATION BY EGYPT AND SYRIA IN PARTICULAR DEPRIVED IT OF TRUE ARAB LEAGUE CREDENTIALS WHILE THE LIBYANS BOORISHLY PURSUED THEIR FOREIGN POLICY GOALS OF DOMINATING AFRICAN COUNTRIES. THE JOURNALIST SAID THAT NOTHING

CONCRETE WAS ACHIEVED AND THAT THE INVENTORY OF AFRICAN PRESS RESOURCES, WHICH THE TUNIS NON-ALIGNED MEETING ON INFORMATION HAD CALLED FOR (SEE TUNIS 1497) WAS NOT READY FOR STUDY. THIS SOURCE NOTED THAT TUNISIAN PRESS AGENCY CHIEF MAHMOUD TRIKI TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HIS PRESENCE AT CONFERENCE (HE WAS ELECTED ITS PRESIDING OFFICER) TO BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH AFRICAN PRESS CHIEFS AND HE EFFECTIVELY HEADED OFF ATTEMPTS BY PARTICIPANTS FROM RADICAL STATES TO ADOPT POLITICAL RESOLUTIONS ATTACKING THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES. THIS JOURNALIST TOLD US THAT THE LIBYAN RECEPTION TEAM FOR THE CONFERENCE GREETED AFRICAN PARTICIPANTS WITH INSULTING COMMENTS THAT THEY HAD ONLY COME TO PROFIT FROM LIBYAN LARGESSE.

3. MAHMOUD TRIKI TOLD US THAT THE TRIPOLI CONFERENCE HAD ACHIEVED NOTHING TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NON-ALIGNED PRESS POOL IN AFRICA. HE NOTED AS WELL THAT THE ABRASIVE CONDUCT OF THE LIBYANS HAD MADE THE CONFERENCE UNCOMFORTABLE FOR MOST PARTICIPANTS.
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